

STATE OF COLORADO
Department of State

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Election Watch List

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County

Montrose

Background

On November 7, 2006, the voters of Montrose County experienced long lines at various locations while attempting to vote. Various problems with the electronic voting equipment led to the long lines and delays.

The county subsequently formed a task force to look into the issues associated with the long wait times and requested that Secretary of State staff participate in the meetings. In doing so, Secretary of State staff discovered a number of issues that were previously unknown to the department.

As a result, the Secretary of State conducted an investigation and found numerous violations of state law, the most crucial being violations of security requirements. These violations are outlined in the Official 2007 Montrose Report on the Secretary's website. The Secretary of State did not find any fraudulent activity associated with the 2006 General Election in Montrose County.

Deficiencies

The most severe violation identified by the Secretary of State was the county's failure to comply with the security requirements associated with the voting equipment and election records.

The county failed to

- Secure the room where the election records were stored;
- Seal the mobile ballot box cards;
- Create and use a number of chain of custody logs;
- Secure all voting equipment in a consistent manner with seals; and
- Conduct the required Logic and Accuracy Testing on the voting equipment prior to use on Election Day.

In addition, the county did not adequately limit access to the computer responsible for tallying votes cast; a blank password was used and the equipment was located near a public entrance.

The Secretary of State also discovered that county officials experienced numerous problems with programming, including failure to:

- Reset the machines after the 2006 Primary Election;
- Appropriately program the write-in candidate; and
- Supply the Secretary of State with additional databases created as a result of the programming errors.

Additionally, issues were identified with regards to staff and election judge training. A single point of knowledge was created with one county election staff member, creating significant problems when that person was unavailable and creating an environment in which fraudulent activity could have more easily occurred. Furthermore, the recording of information into the pollbook by the election judges was inconsistent resulting in unidentifiable discrepancies between the pollbook and signature cards.

Remediation

The Secretary of State requires Montrose County to examine its staffing structure and ensure cross-training amongst all staff members; supporting documentation of such training shall be provided to the Secretary of State. The county shall also look at the program used to train election judges to ensure that consistency is achieved in checking in voters and properly recording their information.

Montrose County submitted a county security plan in mid-February 2007 (the report was due in October 2006), which has been approved by the Secretary of State. The county must now ensure that all requirements are met through successful implementation of that security plan. The Secretary of State shall conduct an on-site visit on a mutually agreed upon date to verify that all security measures are implemented in accordance with the security plan and state law.

The Secretary of State shall require periodic conference calls with the Montrose County Clerk and Recorder and elections staff. Updates will be provided by the county as to the status of preparation for the next election, as well as the status of current corrections to identified deficiencies.

Montrose County shall provide to the Secretary of State documentation illustrating either the purchase of additional voting equipment, or a plan detailing the measures the county is implementing to ensure acceptable voter wait times.

A contingency plan shall be created and provided to the Secretary of State detailing procedures to be used in the event of technological failure during an election. The plan shall address the counties back-up method to an electronic pollbook, for the vote center model, as well as communication procedures for election judges and county officials. Additionally, the plan shall address the method the county shall take to provide more paper ballots to a location in the event of a shortage. Specific methods shall be determined by the county election official and

communicated to the Secretary of State; the objective being to ensure that voters are not subjected to unreasonable wait times.

Lastly, the county is required to participate in the Secretary of State's certification program, which is currently being strengthened to ensure that the clerk and staff have a working knowledge of all aspects of election management.